

NSC BRIEFING

7 May 1954

BASIC DATA ON TONKIN DELTA

I. The French position in delta:

A. Total troop strength: 192,500.

1. Regulars - 134,000
(25 French infantry battalions)
(21 Vietnamese infantry battalions)
(3 Vietnamese National Guard battalions)
(13 Vietnamese Light Infantry battalions)
(27 French Union mobile battalions)

2. Irregulars - 58,500.

B. Disposition

1. Static: There are 24 battalions in the sectors bordering the "perimeter;" 25 are in the interior of the delta.
2. Mobile: In various areas of the delta, according to operations.
3. Light: Scattered throughout the delta.

C. Areas of control

1. The French hold 700 out of 5 - 6,000 villages in the delta.
2. Principal communications routes
 - a. Hanoi-Haiphong road and rail link
 - b. Hanoi-Nam Dinh road
 - c. Nam Dinh-Haiphong road

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D. French air strength: 539 planes (total Indochina)

1. Fighters - 148
2. Light bombers - 41
3. Transports - 104
4. Recon planes - 16
5. Liaison - 148
6. Medical evacuation - 55
7. Trainers - 27

E. French airfields

1. Do San, Cat Bi, Kien An, Gia Lam, Bach Mai.
2. Less important fields at Son Tay, Nam Dinh, Phat Diem, Phu Ly, Vinh Yen, Phuc Yen, Bac Ninh, Phu Lang Thuong, Quang Yen and Hou Cay.

F. French air personnel (total Indochina) - 11,000.

G. French naval strength

1. Light aircraft carriers - 2 (in Gulf of Tonkin)
2. Patrol vessels - 25 (coastal areas)
3. Mine vessels - 6 (coastal areas)
4. Amphibious vessels - 24 (in delta rivers)
5. Utility Landing Craft - 19 (in delta rivers)
6. Auxiliary vessels - 9 (coastal areas)
7. Service craft - 48 (coastal areas)

H. French naval personnel: 9,000 - 10,000.

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- II. French capability for reinforcement.
- A. Can make about 30 battalions available chiefly from central Laos and central Vietnam, but this figure might be limited by intensified Viet Minh activity in these regions.
- III. Viet Minh position in and near the delta.
- A. 19 battalions (15,200 troops) now in delta, eight battalions (6,400 troops) on the perimeter, and 11 (8,800 troops) en route to the delta from other areas.
- B. In addition, 55,000 irregulars in delta.
- IV. Viet Minh capabilities for reinforcement of delta.
- A. Forces at Dien Bien Phu: 28 battalions; 30,000 troops can move to delta together with equipment in two to three months. Without equipment, troops can probably reach the delta in 10 days after beginning to march.
- B. Scattered throughout Tonkin are about 65,000 more.
- C. Forces in other areas:
1. Central Vietnam - 66,000.
 2. South Vietnam - 37,000
 3. Laos - 15,500
 4. Cambodia - 9,100
- V. Viet Minh logistic capabilities.
- A. Current levels of food and equipment from Communist China has reached 3,000 tons per month. Viet Minh

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produces small quantities of arms and ammunition but even for these must depend on China for raw materials.

B. Trucks available: about 1,400; 200 to 500 more expected soon.

C. Communications system: Viet Minh in recent months has improved road network in northwest Tonkin, [REDACTED]

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D. Condition of roads: Roads considered adequate for troop and supply movements. Rains hamper vehicular movement, but coolies make up for this shortcoming.

VI. Weather

A. General Description: Rain generally falls in form of heavy local showers of hour or two duration, with good weather and visibility otherwise.

B. Precipitation Statistics:

1. Monthly mean at Hanoi (in inches) during rainy season:

June 9.4

July 12.7

August 13.5

September 10

2. In general throughout delta, July is month of heaviest rainfall, with range of 11 - 25 inches, as compared with 1.7 inches in November.

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C. Effect on air operations: Aside from one or two hour intervals of heavy rains, weather is usually favorable. From one-third to two-thirds of days between May and November favorable for flying. Sod and natural-surfaced airfields are probably of little use, however.

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